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ABSTRACT

In the first part of this paper several theories on the subject of communicative competence are examined. Part 2 is devoted to a discussion of how a teacher can test for communicative competence, and the practicality of this type of testing, in terms of class time, equipment required and objective grading, is emphasized. Part 3 summarizes a number of experiments conducted to determine the effectiveness of communicative competence training. The paper concludes with a detailed list of communicative exercises representing various levels of difficulty. (PHP)

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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The purpose of this paper is to review the theories on the subject of communicative competence, report on some of the experimentation, and offer concrete, practical suggestions for its implementation in the classroom.

General Considerations

Communicative competence is the ability to converse or correspond with another person in a real-life situation. The major concern for the speaker is that the listener understand his message. This may entail the use of incorrect pronunciation, grammar, and even vocabulary. It may also involve the use of gestures in place of verbal cues.

Savignon's definition of communicative competence is as follows: "the ability to function in a truly communicative setting--that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors."¹

Most foreign language teachers claim that effective communication is indeed their ultimate goal, and herein lies the problem. The "now" student is unwilling to wait until the ultimate goal is reached; he wants meaningful experiences today.

The philosophy of the sixties was that mastery of a certain number of dialogs, pattern drills, and directed dialogs would automatically lead to "real communication." The result in most classrooms was that many students demonstrated mastery of the audio-lingual drills, but could not pass the time of day, on the simplest level, with a native speaker.

In the pure audio-lingual classes of the early sixties, the teacher, or drill master, made every effort to prevent language errors from occurring. It was thought that constant repetition of the correct forms of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, as well as their positions in sentences, would reduce the chances of error when students "used" the language. Thus, the emphasis was clearly on "linguistic competence"--the ability to produce accurately the discrete components of the language. Attention was given to manipulation of the language structures, often without much regard for the

content (message). It did not matter whether Johnny's sister had one blue eye and one brown eye; the important consideration was whether Johnny made the verbs, nouns and adjectives agree when he answered the question. In a sense, the format of the drills forced the student to give false information about himself and the people with whom he associated. He was required to say he had three brothers, when, in reality, he had two, or he had to say he preferred meatballs to veal cutlets when he really disliked both. As a result, little or no real communication took place. While it is true that some of the textbooks offered suggestions for the final stage--referred to as transposition, recombination, or liberated speech--few teachers reached that point.

It would amaze most language teachers to witness what their weakest students could do if they were in a situation where they were obliged to speak the foreign language. This author's teen-age son, who had just completed one year of French without distinction, was able to make several dates to play tennis with French teen-agers after having just arrived in a French town. The French youngsters, incidentally, communicated in a brand of English that was no better than my son's French. The desire to socialize was so great that language proficiency was no barrier.

Linguists point out that our speech is full of "redundancies"--supplementary grammatical cues that are really not needed for conveying messages. The American who says, Yo lo di al chico, is perfectly understood, even though he omitted the se in front of the verb. He also could have dropped the yo.

In the sentence Les avocates sont présentes, the spoken version has three plural cues: [le], [z] and [sʒ], and two feminine cues: [avokat] and [prezât]. The written version has even more cues. Every word is pluralized. Les avocates sont présentes.

Another highly important factor is the context. The Spaniard who says, "I came to the United States on a sheep," is not misunderstood.

French phoneticians drill relentlessly the phonemes [y] versus [u]. Yet the American who tells his French friends, J'ai [lu] le journal, has clearly conveyed the message. No French person would think of the words "wolf" or "rent" in this context. Likewise, the American who exclaims, Je suis tombé dans la roue, creates no comprehension problem in his interlocutor.

How different the situation is when we are in a foreign country. Johnny can walk into a French shoe shop, ask for a pair of shoes in excruciating French, and get rewarded; he walks out of the shop with a pair of shoes. His same performance in an American classroom results in some sort of punishment--a low grade, a frown from the teacher, and even a reprimand. Little wonder that our students remain silent! They soon realize that their teacher is not interested

in what they have to say, but in how they say it. In a real sense, they are being rejected by the teacher for what they are--incompetent speakers of a foreign language.

We do not treat little children this way. Research shows that mothers correct their children only when the latter give false information or use "dirty words."^{2,3} Elementary school teachers of language arts do not correct children's pronunciation or grammar during the periods set aside for free oral expression. Nor do they mark up a paper with red pencil when children express themselves in creative writing activities.

The foregoing remarks are not intended to denigrate the value of practice drills. There is a time and place for linguistic exercises. The secret, and unfortunately it cannot be taught, is to know when to stop drilling and when to let the students say anything they wish without interruption. It is this author's opinion that the latter aspect is woefully neglected.

Rivers⁴ compares the manipulative exercises (skill-getting) to the route that we must take in order to reach our final goal--real communication. She points out that most teachers concentrate on the "route" and lose sight of the ultimate goal. Teachers find it more comfortable to do the type of drills in which there is only one correct answer. Examples of "route-as-goal" activities are the elicitation by the teacher of a perfect imitation of a French sentence or choir-like perfection in construction exercises.

To bridge the gap between manipulative exercises and real communication, Rivers⁵ proposes learning activities which she calls "pseudo-communication." These consist of teacher-directed exercises but allow for open-ended responses and rejoinders.

Some examples⁶ of pseudo-communication are as follows:

a. Liar's Club

The structure to be practiced serves as a model. Each person then fills in the "slots" with his own fib.

I borrowed a thousand dollars but I didn't pay it back.

Last night I flew to the moon and I didn't come back.

b. Indirect Speech

Instructor: I don't like rock music.

Student A: He says he doesn't like rock music.

Student B: He said he didn't like rock music.

c. Game of Confidences

- One student whispers a secret to his neighbor, who in turn, whispers it to the next person, and so on until the last student hears it. The last student repeats what he thought he heard, to the great amusement of the class.

d. Expansion Exercises (Chaining Activity)

Each person adds a word or phrase to the sentence previously spoken. This may be used as a competitive game.

Student A: He goes to town.

Student B: He often goes to town.

Student C: He often goes to town on Wednesdays.

Student D: He often goes to town by train on Wednesdays.

Student E: He often goes to town by train with his sister on Wednesdays.

Paulston⁷ categorizes pattern drills as manipulative, meaningful, and communicative.

A manipulative type of exercise makes use of a one-word cue:

Pattern: I'm reading a book.

Cue: Magazine

Response: I'm reading a magazine.

Cue: Newspaper

Response: I'm reading a newspaper.

A meaningful drill is teacher-controlled but allows for more than one response:

Question: When did you arrive this morning?

Answer: I arrived at nine o'clock.

Question: When will you leave this evening?

Answer: I'll leave at six o'clock.

A communicative drill is one in which the response is completely free, i.e., not governed by a particular grammatical structure or pattern. An example might be, "What did you have for breakfast?" A truly communicative response would be, "I overslept and skipped breakfast so I wouldn't miss the bus."

Another significant variable in the acquisition of communicative competence is attitude. All of us thrive on successful achievements followed by praise. Every learning activity in a language classroom should be designed to provide a feeling of success in the learner. The slowest achiever may only be able to make choices by uttering si or no. The more advanced can react using longer utterances.

Our verbal and non-verbal cues must, at all times, be supportive of the responses, regardless of their length or accuracy.

The more accepting we are of our students' performance, the more willing they will be to communicate. I have seen adults tremble with pleasure when they spoke French for the first time with a native and got rewarded with a rejoinder. Even if the American says, Quelle heure est-elle?, the Frenchman will give him the time without correcting the pronoun!

If communicative competence is the goal of classroom instruction, then, it follows that teachers must have a h' tolerance for error.

Testing

The tests which foreign language teachers typically give are designed to measure the mastery of small fragments of the language: fill in the endings of future tense verbs, change present tense sentences to the past, substitute pronouns for nouns, match synonyms or antonyms, etc.. Successful completion of these discrete-point tasks has little or nothing to do with real communication. As Clark⁸ points out, "One of the most salient characteristics of real-life language use is the absence of a close and easily determined relationship between sheer linguistic ability--defined in such terms as accuracy of pronunciation, range of vocabulary, accuracy and extent of grammatical control, and so forth--and communicative proficiency--defined as the ability to get a message across to an interlocutor with a specified ease and effect."

In most cases, teachers believe that testing for communicative competence is impractical; they claim it is too time-consuming, requires expensive equipment, and is difficult to grade objectively. Let us consider each of these arguments. First, testing does not have to be time-consuming if it involves short quizzes based on a limited amount of material. Schulz⁹ starts with a basic beginning dialog and has students generate the following French conversation:

Pretend you are walking across campus and are meeting a young Frenchman, Robert Dupont, whom you know from a course you are taking together. Write down what you would say to him (in French, of course!) in order to:

greet him;

find out how he is, where he is going, and if he is working;

tell him that you are going to a café;

say farewell.

(4 points for each complete utterance. Total possible score: 24 points)

Second, the equipment need not be expensive. The above exercise was written, but it could have been recorded. An increasing number

of schools and individual students have cassette recorders. The above communicative exercise could have been recorded at little expense on cassette tapes. The exercise would take about two minutes to record. In a class of 25 students and with five cassette recorders, it could be done in ten minutes.

Third, the question of objectivity in grading becomes less important if the goal of the test is to convey information and not produce perfect French. The sole criterion in a test of communicative competence is intelligibility, and let us keep in mind that messages can be transmitted whether or not the grammar and pronunciation are entirely accurate.

The standardized tests that come closest to evaluating communicative competence are the picture tests of the speaking sections of the MLA Cooperative Tests (French, Spanish, German, Russian and Italian)¹⁰ and the Pimsleur Proficiency Tests (French, Spanish).¹¹

It is also a truism that students tend to give most attention to that which is being tested in their course. In Chastain's words,

...the practical objectives of the course are set by the tests. No matter what the teacher states as the goals of the course, the students study for the test. The tests, then, in spite of all protestations to the contrary, determine what the students emphasize in their study.¹²

Empirical Investigations

In the Fall of 1969, Jarvis¹³ conducted an experiment with 14 sections of a beginning French course at Purdue University. Each of the seven instructors taught a control class and an experimental class. The text and basic materials were the same for all classes. The treatment differed in the following way: the control group performed manipulative activities in the form of pattern drills, cued question-and-answer practice, and multiple-response practice (where students are to give as many different responses or rejoinders as they can recall to a given question or utterance); the experimental group used primarily a question-answer format, but every response had to be truthful. In other words, each question and answer was based on contextual situations.

For example, when the French verb aller was drilled, the control group responded to cues such as, "I am going to the show, (you, he, they, etc.)," or "change from singular to plural, e.g., I am going to the show. —> We are going to the show." By contrast, the contextual drills of the experimental group involved true communication: one student asks another, "Are you going to the show tonight?" A second student might be asked about the first, "Is he going to the show tonight?" The question could be asked about several: "Are they going to the show tonight?"

The findings of this experiment showed that the contextual-drill group was far superior in speaking and writing to the manipulative-drill group. Both groups were approximately at the same level of proficiency in reading and listening. Students performing contextual drills had a somewhat more positive attitude toward their classes.

A similar study was conducted by Joiner¹⁴ at Winthrop College, South Carolina. Six classes of freshmen who had studied French previously, but had received low scores on the placement test, were randomly divided into two groups. The methods used with the control group were labeled "non-communicative." They consisted mostly of manipulative exercises of the pattern drill or question-answer (information) variety. The experimental group treatment was labeled "communicative," and was characterized by the use of true communication. The typical exercise was one in which the questioner solicited information that he really did not know. For example, "How many brothers and sisters do you have?" No questions were used if the answers were evident, such as, "What color is this apple?" Both speaker and interlocutor could see the color of the apple, and, therefore, no new information was transmitted. Joiner was influenced by Paulston's¹⁵ viewpoint on true communication. Paulston argues that only those instances when one human being is in the position of supplying missing information to another human being can be called communicative exchange.

Joiner's tests, composed of the tasks of describing, reporting and interviewing, showed significant statistical differences in favor of the experimental group.

Savignon's¹⁶ investigation into the field of communicative competence provided the profession with effective examples of classroom activities and tests as well as with very convincing evidence of the positive effects of this approach. The purpose of her experiment was threefold: (1) to develop tests of communicative competence, (2) to ascertain the effectiveness of early communicative competence training, and (3) to determine the effects of this training on attitude and motivation in a unicultural setting.

Forty-two beginning French students, divided into three groups, participated in the experiment. It took place during the Fall semester, 1969-70, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Two groups were experimental (E-1 and E-2) and the third, control (C). All groups spent four weekly periods learning basic skills. Their text was Basic French Conversation, by Harris and Leveque.

On the fifth day, E-1 students were given the opportunity to communicate with four instructors, two of whom were native speakers. They exchanged greetings, made dates, asked directions, and discussed current events (communicative competence training). The E-2 section spent their fifth day learning about France. They met French people, saw French films, and discussed in English the

differences between the two cultures. Group C went to the language laboratory and practiced the drills based on the materials they had learned in class. The hypothesis was that students in E-1 would, after 18 hours (one period per week), be better able to communicate with native speakers than the other two groups.

The communicative tests, 30 minutes in length, were administered to all students individually at the end of the semester. They involved a discussion and interview with a native speaker and two oral reports. The communicative skills group (E-1) performed significantly better than either the culture group (E-2) or the control group (C) on the tests of communicative skill and on teachers' evaluation of oral skill.

Probably the most interesting finding is that interest in France or in the French language and culture is of little or no value in predicting success in elementary language acquisition in a unicultural Midwestern community. The students who had the most positive attitudes toward their French course were those who had learned to give and receive messages in French, i.e., to communicate in the language.

In the Fall of 1972, Powell¹⁷ designed an experiment in which she was interviewed by 223 high school students in the Columbus, Ohio, area. She posed as a native French girl who knew no English. The students were asked to find out, as best they could, the answers to a series of questions. The questions, which were written in English, had to be put into French so that the "French girl" could understand them. Each question contained a different syntactic problem:

List of information to find out about Jacqueline:

1. If she has any brothers or sisters
2. What their names are
3. Where her parents are
4. If her mother is shorter or taller than you are
5. Where she was born (city)
6. What she did on Sundays when she was a little girl
7. Why she doesn't speak English
8. If she drinks coffee or wine with meals
9. Where she's going to spend next summer
10. What she wants to see most in America
11. When she has to leave for France
12. If she would stay in America, if she could
13. If the French government sent her
14. Where she would like to live

Although the students were only at the second level of French study, they did surprisingly well in their ability to communicate. A sample of one of the interviews follows:

Subject #663 11 minutes

1. Est-ce que...vous êtes...un frère ou un soeur... [e]
vous, vous avez
2. Qu'est-ce que les [nəm]...de votre...soeur
3. Où est votre parent
4. Est-ce que votre...mère...grand que vous or, ou...
petite que vous
5. Où...vous...[zɛt]...[ntɛ]...le opposite, er le con-
traire de [mɔrtɛ]
6. Qu'est-ce que vous...vous [fe]...quand vous êtes jeune
Qu'est-ce que vous êtes, [vuzfe], (echoing experimenter)
quand vous êtes jeune à...samedi
7. Pourquoi vous, vous n'êtes pas...pourquoi vous ne parlez
pas anglaise
8. Boirez-vous...café ou...vin avec les dîners
9. Où...vous...va...Où le...Où allez-vous...à...l'été...
ne pas l'été...now...quatre, soixante-douze, mais
soixante-trois...l'été
10. Voyez-vous...Est-ce que vous voyez en Amérique...Qu'est-ce
que vous voyez...Qu'est-ce que vous...voulez...voir
en Amérique
11. Quand vous...partirez...à France
12. Vous voulez...Est-ce que vous voulez...rester en Amérique
13. Est-ce que le française...government...veut...vous...
venir Amérique
14. Voulez-vous...est-ce que vous voulez rester...Est-ce que
vous voulez habiter...Qu'est-ce que...Quand...Quand vous
voulez...Quand...vous...aimez habiter...France ou Amérique

Many of the students appeared extremely nervous during the interview; it was the first time that most of them had met a real live French person (or so they thought!). This fact indicates that not enough teachers arrange personal contacts between native speakers and their students. Community resources, in many instances, are not being sufficiently tapped.¹⁸

Powell discovered that the students were able to communicate with a surprisingly few structures. She recommends, therefore, that the number of structures presented for active control in a language program be radically reduced and that students be given more opportunities for oral communication.

In 1974 Schulz¹⁹ conducted an experiment in four beginning French classes at Ohio State University. All four sections were given the same text and materials and were taught by instructors who used a modified audio-lingual method. The hypothesis to be tested was whether the type of weekly tests given the students would make a difference in their learning strategies. The control group (2 classes) was tested on discrete-point items, such as tests intended to measure whether the student could recall and manipulate specific grammatical, lexical, or factual elements. The experimental group (2 sections) was tested on its ability to ask and respond to personalized questions and other communicative activities that went beyond the basic dialogs and pattern drills of each chapter.

The communicative tests, constructed almost entirely by Schulz, contained sections on listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The latter were given in the language laboratory. The students in the experimental group--those tested on communicative activities--achieved consistently higher mean scores on simulated communication tests than did students tested on discrete-point items.

In an effort to discover what learner factors are related to communicative competence, Bartz²⁰ tested 50 high school German students, level II and above, from December, 1973 through March, 1974. These students, in two high schools near Columbus, Ohio, were given linguistic and communication tests in all skills, as well as the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) and other tests. One of the German communicative tests, constructed by Bartz, required the student to listen to a German telephone message and relate the message in written English (see p. 14). Findings in this experiment showed a high correlation between linguistic ability and communicative competence.

Oller and Obrecht²¹ conducted an experiment to test the hypothesis that using structured patterns in meaningful situations leads to improved communicative performance. Twenty high school students who scored B or better on the Verbal Reasoning section of the Differential Aptitude Tests (DAT) were selected. The students were divided into two groups according to grade level, scores on the DAT verbal, and sex.

The procedure for both groups (group A and B) consisted of pattern drilling in Spanish. Group A heard the English meaning of each line only once. The rest of the time was devoted to repetition of the segments of the pattern in Spanish and a communicative test.

Group B heard the English more than once, were given a directed dialog, a question/answer exercise, and a communicative test. As they repeated the pattern drill, they observed freehand drawings of the objects referred to in the Spanish sentences.

Group B performed significantly better on the test. The data tended to confirm the hypothesis that relating pattern drills to meaningful activity can lead to improved communication.

Classroom Techniques

The following communicative exercises represent various levels of difficulty, starting from the simplest and progressing to the more complex.

Guessing Exercises²²

1. Ask one student to recall (silently) the time he went to bed last night. Then the other students try to guess. One by one they ask, à onze heures? (a las once?), à dix heures? (a las diez?), etc.
2. Ask one student to say the month he was born. Then the other students try to guess the exact date. One by one they ask the first student, le 3 mars? (el 3 de marzo?), le 14 mars?, le 23 mars?, etc.

Human Development Exercises²³

1. Values Continuum

Task: Look at this line. Where are you?

I prefer to be alone.

I prefer to be with people.

|-----|

One by one the students come forward and put on the line a mark indicating their feelings. Above the mark they write their name.

The verb (to be)

Comment allez-vous? Je vais _____.

très mal

comme ci, comme ça

très bien

|-----|

2. Recall

Each person shows his interest in his classmates by recalling what various individuals have said:

Jim, you are happy at the beach.

María, tu estás contenta en la playa.

Henri, tu es content au réfectoire.

3. Incomplete Sentence

The teacher asks, "If I could change this class, I would....." and each student completes the sentence in his own way.

or

Ich spreche mehr als _____.

Ich weiss weniger als _____.

Ich bin älter als _____.

or

Cuando era pequeño(a), yo dudaba _____.

Temía que mis padres _____.

Me gustaba que mis padres _____.

4. Interview

a. Practice on Tenses

Two students interview each other and practice on the future tense:

What will you do tomorrow at 4:00 P.M.?

What will you eat for supper?

Will you go to the dance this Saturday?

With whom will you dance?

At what time will you return home?

If you get home late, will your parents be angry?

b. The Self-Directed Dialog²⁴

Students must find out the following information from their classmates whose names appear on the following list. They must be prepared to report back in French.

The name of Jane's brother.

The color of Michael's mother's eyes.

If Pam has any brothers or sisters.

The age of Christine's father.

If Paul prefers the movies or television.

c. Interview Game²⁵

Mais vous êtes ma femme!

The Game: Each player is given a card containing information about himself as well as about another individual, similar to the following:

<u>Moi</u>	<u>Ma Femme</u>
ingénieur	décoratrice
français	française
50 ans	45 ans
2 enfants	2 enfants
maison	maison
Paris	Paris

Players must both ask and answer questions based on this information in order to reunite their "families." In response to questions put to him, the player must make use of the information appearing under Moi, e.g., "Je suis ingénieur," "Je suis français," "J'habite une maison," etc. On the other hand, he must himself ask questions in order to find his wife. His wife is the player who satisfies all the conditions listed under Ma Femme. A typical exchange between two players might go as follows:

Q: Quelle est votre profession?

A: Je suis décoratrice.

Q: Quel âge avez-vous?

A: J'ai quarante-cinq ans.

or

Q: Vous êtes décoratrice?

A: Oui, je suis décoratrice.

Q: Vous avez cinquante ans?

A: Non, j'ai quarante-cinq ans.

When the answers to his questions correspond to the description the first player has of his wife, he exclaims, "Mais vous êtes ma femme!" If, on the other hand, one of the answers is unsatisfactory, he interrupts his questioning and declares, "Ah, vous n'êtes pas ma femme!" He then goes on to question another player. Participants are free to move around the classroom and ask questions of anyone they choose. Note that no two players are looking for the same person. For instance, the father looks for his wife, the wife looks for her son, the son looks for his sister, the daughter looks for her father, etc. If at any point the father "discovers" his wife, or the son his sister, both may team up and look for the remaining members of the family. For instance, the father has

found his wife; she, however, has not yet been able to locate her son. She may communicate the information about her son to her husband so that he may proceed to look for their son, thus doubling this family's chances of being reunited at the earliest opportunity.

Listening Exercise²⁶

(Instruction to the students): You are living in Germany with a German family (the Schmidts) for the summer. The whole family has gone out of the house. The telephone rings. You answer the phone and after appropriate greetings, the party on the line wants to talk to Frau Schmidt. You try to tell her she is not there, but she insists on giving you a message. You hear her say the following. Listen carefully and take notes in English. Then write up in English your message for Frau Schmidt.

(Instructions for administration): Read the following telephone message at a "normal" rate, leaving small pauses between each sentence. Read the message the second time without pauses.

Ich bin die Nachbarin, Frau Müller. Ich wollte Frau Schmidt sprechen. Würden Sie ihr bitte sagen, dass ich morgen um 8 Uhr vorbeikomme und dann können wir zusammen einkaufen gehen. Sie hat mir gestern gesagt, dass ich mit meinem Auto fahren soll, aber das kann ich jetzt nicht. Mein Mann muss das Auto haben. Er muss morgen früh nach Hamburg fahren. Ich möchte gern beim Supermarkt in Bremen einkaufen. Nach Bremen müssen wir aber fahren. Ich möchte wissen, ob wir mit Frau Schmidt's Auto fahren können. Sagen Sie ihr, dass sie mich heute abend um 10 Uhr anrufen soll.

Scoring procedure: One point per item of information comprehended by the student as reflected in his English message for Frau Schmidt.

Situational Exercises (written or spoken)

1. Guided written or oral composition.
 - a. Call someone on the telephone, greet him and ask him how he is. Tell him you are going to play tennis tomorrow and ask him if he can play. Tell him you will drive your car and can stop at his house at ten o'clock. Tell him it has been a long time since you saw each other. Then say good-bye.
 - b. You are telling your friend about a party you went to last night. Tell him you came to the party with two friends. You had to cross the city to go to Luisa's

house. You arrived and left your car in front of her house. You entered and found Luisa and three other girls. You listened to records, danced, and had a good time. At midnight you heard someone at the door. You opened it, and a policeman gave you a ticket for illegal parking.

- c. You are interested in a certain girl and would like to make a date with her. You meet her in front of a cafe in Mexico City. Greet her and tell her how glad you are to see her. Ask her if she has to go home now, or if she can stay a little while. Ask her if she would like to sit down. Call the waiter and order two beers. Tell her she is pretty. Ask her if she hears the music and if she likes Mariachi music. Ask her if she is having a good time. Ask her why she has to leave. Ask her if you can see her tomorrow. Say, "So long," and tell her how pleasant it was to see her.

2. Experience Charts (TESOL class)

Teacher says to students: Dictate to me what you haven't done since you arrived in the United States. I will write your comments on the overhead projector. Then, I will turn out the lamp, and all of you try to remember what your classmates have said.

Chang: I haven't gone downtown.
José: I haven't seen the suburbs.
María: I haven't gone shopping.
Alberto: I haven't played tennis.

Communication Practice Drills²⁷

1. Drill the following structures:

I would tell him to shut the door.
her turn on the light.
them bring some food.

2. Teacher: Karen, if you and Susan came to class at 8 A.M., and it was winter, and the room was dark, what would you tell Susan?

Karen: (with any luck at all) I would tell her to turn on the light.

Teacher: And how about you, Paul, if you were with Mary and you wanted to read, what would you do?

Paul: I would tell her to turn on the light.

Teacher: (in student's native language) You as a boy would tell a girl to do that for you?

Teacher: (continuing in the target language) Paul, if you came alone, and if I was in the room, what would you do?

Paul: I would tell you to turn on the light.

Teacher: Then I would throw you out of class.

Conclusion

To develop communicative competence in our students, we must first of all be interested in them as human beings. We must truly care about what they think and how they feel; their "message" is more important than their grammar or their pronunciation. Our tolerance for error must be high. Although we provide time in our curriculum for practice drills, our major emphasis is on exchanging information and ideas. Thus, whenever we engage in communicative learning activities, our sole criterion is intelligibility. For many teachers, this approach requires a total reappraisal of their goals and careful restructuring of their language programs.

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